



Over a Thousand Hills I Walk With You

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Jeanne d'Arc Umubyeyi, known to her family and friends by her pet name, Dédé, was eight years old at the time of the Rwanda genocide. This is her story of that time, as told by her German adoptive mother. Told in the third person, the story begins with her childhood as the daughter of teachers, and her memories of family and friends, and of the usual escapades and quarrels. The story is told from her perspective, puzzled and infected by the anxiety of overheard adult conversations but not understanding the worsening political situation or why anyone should make a distinction between Hutu and Tutsi. When the violence begins, it is all the more sudden and shocking for having no apparent explanation. In the space of two days, Dédé sees her mother and brother slaughtered along with many of her neighbours, and loses sight of her younger sister and her father, never to see them again. Along with two other girls, she is taken under the wing of Maria, a Hutu mother, whose Tutsi husband has already been killed, who is taking her two sons to safety. A greater horror is to come, when they reach the farm worked by Maria's brother. Here, Maria's young sons are killed by their uncle, because they are the sons of a Tutsi. Only with the arrival of rebel forces does Jeanne find safety. More remarkable than a documentary, all the more harrowing for its restraint, and written with a mother's love, each chapter of this memoir is preceded by a short intimate address from the author to her daughter, which brings Jeanne's story up to date, shows some of the adjustments that her new life in Germany requires, and offers what perspective it can on her past. The book is completed by a historical timeline, which allows the reader to piece together the political background to the bloodshed.

Running Order:

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